



The Potting Shed is a free monthly newsletter from the University of Georgia Extension in Bryan County. We provide science-based information to help Coastal Georgia gardeners. Have a question or need help, contact your local County Extension Office.

David Moulder dmoulder@uga.edu



David B. Moulder
Bryan County Extension,
CEC



Barbara S. DuBose,
Secretary

Bryan County Extension

P. O. Box 250
131 N. College Street
Pembroke, GA 31321

Phone: (912) 653-2231

Fax: (912) 653-2236

E-mail:

dmoulder@uga.edu

or: uge3029@uga.edu

Winterize Lawn with Potash, Not Nitrogen

To winterize Southern, warm-season lawns, apply a fertilizer with more potash than nitrogen. Potash is represented by the third number on a fertilizer bag, while nitrogen is shown as the first.

In the fall, the emphasis in feeding changes from growth to strength. In September, apply a fertilizer with less nitrogen to slow growth and more potash to build stress tolerance.

Our lawn grasses are the warm-season type, so they grow when it's warm and not much when it's cool. That means we must encourage growth with nitrogen in warm weather and not push the grasses when we shouldn't. The 'shouldn't' time is fast approaching.

A general, complete lawn fertilizer has three major nutrients listed in this order: nitrogen (N), phosphate (P₂O₅) and potash (K₂O).

Feeding a relatively high N in the fall, we will spur soft, lush growth; soft growth is more subject to diseases like brown patch. This damage won't have time to grow out of it because the cooler weather and shorter days won't let it.

A Fall lawn care plan should encourage only moderate, slow growth on centipede and St. Augustine lawns. Beware of northern-blend winterizers that have high N and moderate potash. Apply any fall Nitrogen fertilization for St. Augustine in September. It is not needed in October.

If you already have been applying about half as much potash as N, winterizing is not necessary. If you have been putting out mostly N this summer, apply a southern winterizer now or just a muriate of potash (0-0-60) at 1 to 2 pounds of muriate per 1,000 square feet.

Another important fall chore is to clear leaves from the turf surface to avoid blockage of sunlight. Also, maintain adequate moisture during this typically dry season to sustain slow but solid growth.



In addition, raise the cutting height a notch except with centipede grass to get more leaf area for more stored food. One chore you don't have to do, however, is aerify or dethatch this late in the year.

If pests show up, get on them. Damage from disease or insects will hurt the turf's ability to store food for winter survival. Many times we are tempted to say, "Oh well, it's going to turn brown soon anyway." Now is a great time to put down your first pre-emerge treatment

September

What do Gardener's do in September?

It's a little late in the year to plant summer annuals and still too hot for winter annuals. The best way to spend your time is to observe and write notes on how your plants performed this year. Take the time to jot down your observations. How much sunlight are the flowerbeds getting? Did the plants seem happy and bloom well in their present location? Were the flower colors complimentary to the house or did they create visual chaos? Keeping a journal, even if you only write in it weekly, will help guide your plant choices next year. The placement of colorful, annual flowerbeds will change as your permanent landscape plants mature.

Annual Flowers

It may be too hot to actually transplant or even buy winter annuals, but September is the month to start germinating seeds of plants that love cool weather. Starting the seed in trays containing a soil-less, "seed starter" potting mix (fine textured sphagnum moss and vermiculite) gives the best results. Begin by moistening the potting mix. Then, scatter the seeds. Top with the potting mix, covering the seeds to the recommended planting depth. Mist the top with water from a spray bottle. Cover the tray with plastic wrap to help retain moisture and finally, place it in a shaded area outside. Most seeds will germinate at 65° to 70° F. Once you see little green tops, gradually remove the plastic cover over the next few days and move the tray to a partial sunny location.

The most popular cool season annuals are pansies, snapdragons and ornamental cabbage. There are more choices, but you may have to grow your own from seed. Dig out your seed catalogs, do searches on the internet or scavenge through the seed sections at your local garden centers. If you want different cool season transplants, then please request them now from the places you do business. It's easy to fall into what I call the old "Plant Trap." Let me explain. Garden centers and nurseries stock flat after flat of the same old plants because customers tend to buy what they are used to seeing, i.e. pansies, snapdragons, kale and cabbage. Be a little adventurous this fall! Next month buy an entire flat of something new and become a garden trendsetter.

Some winter annuals do best if they are seeded in place. Sow the seed of *Cheiranthus cheiri* in the cracks of your rock walks or at the edge of paths. It produces clusters of fragrant 1-inch wide yellow, red, white or orange flowers. Our cool, damp winter weather will actually prolong the blooms. Another annual that really needs cool, humid days and nights is *Godetia amoena*. The 4-inch cup-shaped blossoms can be pink, red, peach or bicolor. *Godetia* stems are very stiff, which makes it perfect for bouquets. Would you be interested in a winter annual that resembles balsam or 'Touch-Me-Not' in growth habit and flowering? *Clarkia elegans* or 'Farewell-To-Spring' is the answer. *Clarkia* seed should be broadcast in clumps for stem support. The 2-inch blooms come in red, pink, purple, white or yellow. Most cultivars are double flowered. Other cool season annuals to be on the lookout for are *Lobelia*, *Diascia*, *Dianthus*, *Matthiola*, *Iberis* and *Nemesia*. Some of these plants may end up surprising gardeners and be perennial during mild summers.

Fruit

Clean up under your fruit trees. Pick up or mow over the bad and overripe fruit that has dropped and is unusable. Cut off any branches that were broken due to over loading with fruit. The pruning cut should be smooth and flush with an adjoining limb. Pick up dead limbs and mow more often under your pecan trees. This will make picking up the nuts much easier. If you have a bumper crop, you might consider shaking the trees for one easy weekend of picking.

Perennial Flowers

Refresh your flowerbeds by reapplying mulch in washed out areas. Cut and save the seed from your favorite flowers. My personal experience is that after 4 years of glorious blooming, perennial plants start to decline. The most satisfying experience I can think of in "long-term gardening" is to buy a plant once and then keep it alive year after year. Saving seed is probably the easiest way to do this

Trees and Shrubs

Fall is slowly approaching. The sumac seed heads have turned a bright crimson color. The leaves of black gum trees are speckled with orange and the dogwood leaves are a mottled red. This hint at the changing season means it's time to decide which plants stay, which get divided or maybe rearranged and lastly what area needs to be totally redesigned.

Fall is the absolute best time of year to do landscape renovation. You should plan and budget for this, just like you would for any major house renovation. Soil modification is a must. Get quotes on hauling in soil conditioner, topsoil or mulch and establish a firm date to have it delivered. The next step is to plan to take off at least 3 days from work. September is also a good month to book a landscape design or installation company, if you're unable to do the work yourself. Do not wait any longer. Generally, you need to get on any business' work calendar, which means the actual dirt work won't get started until October (the best month for new plant installation).

Vegetables

It is time to prepare for the fall garden. The first freeze in South Georgia usually occurs around November 14th. Young vegetable plants grow better and produce more, if they've been growing in the garden for at least one month before the first hard freeze. The beginning of September is when you start cabbage, broccoli, kohlrabi, rutabaga and cauliflower seeds in flats. It takes about 6 weeks to get a nice sized transplant from seed and October 15 (planting date) is only six weeks away. Some fall vegetables such as beets, carrots, mustard, lettuce, radishes and greens do not transplant well.

Fall vegetable gardening is generally more productive than spring gardening. I guess I should add, if you like root and leafy type vegetables. The first order of business is to pull up and discard any played out summer vegetables. It is best not to till in the old summer vegetable plants because you may end up spreading a soil borne disease. If you haven't had your soil tested to determine the pH and nutrient levels within the past three years, then do it TODAY. Take a pint of soil and a \$7.00 check to your county Extension office. You will have the written results in 1 to 2 weeks. The exact amount of lime and fertilizer that should be tilled into the garden will come from these test results. In general, no more than 50 pounds of pelletized lime per 1,000 sq. feet should ever be broadcast in a single application. If more lime is needed, then another 50 pounds can be applied 1 1/2 months later. The fertilizer will be applied in 2 or 3 applications. The first is a pre-plant fertilizer application that is incorporated into the soil. The second fertilizer application is called side dressing and is put out 3-4 weeks later. A third application on the leafy vegetable crops may be necessary to promote new growth, if you're a heavy grazer.

Native Plant for September



Loblolly Bay

Gordonia lasianthus

Loblolly bay is an attractive evergreen tree that can grow up to 50-70 feet in height with trunk diameter up to 1.5 ft., usually found in wet areas and can withstand swamp conditions, likes sun to partial shade.

Leaves: It has persistent, leathery, oblong leaves 4-6 in. long that are dark green above and paler green below.

Flower/Fruit: White, pungently fragrant, about 2 1/2 inches in diameter, expanding in July and continuing to open successfully during two or three months, on stout red pedicels, 2 1/2-3 inches long. A capsule, ovoid, acute, pubescent, 3/4 inch long, 1/2 inch in diameter; seed winged, nearly square,

Comments: Loblolly bays' evergreen foliage and showy blossoms makes this plant an excellent specimen tree or grouping in wet areas and at the margins of lakes and ponds. The symmetric narrowly conical form of this tree makes it a most beautiful specimen standing in an expanse of lawn either singly or in groups. Young specimens can be grown in containers on the patio or in pairs flanking an entryway. Needs to be watered in extreme droughty conditions because of the shallow root system and no fear of over watering. This plant is very easy to dig and transplant. This is one of my favorites for landscaping.

No pests or diseases of major concern.